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Internment and the Economic Success of an Unwanted Minority Group

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Maisie and Richard Conrat, "Executive Order 9066." California, UCLA, 1992, 31.

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The Japanese began their migration to the United States in the late 1900s to ease labor shortages in the agriculture industry. The Japanese work ethic and productivity were valued initially, however upon arrival to the United States the Japanese migrants' identity was confused with the Chinese. As a result, they inherited the longstanding dislike of the Chinese by many native-born Americans, which was coined the "yellow peril". Any initial positive feelings toward the Japanese Americans dissolved once they showed their entrepreneurial potential and their desire to improve their economic conditions. The desire to gain ownership of cultivatable land ignited anti-Asian sentiment and spawned a half-century of restrictive state and federal laws as well as the eventual internment of an entire group.

Durring the decades before the Pearl Harbor attack, the equality and rights of the Japanese immigrants were challenged in many ways. Once again the relocation and internment of Japanese Americans positioned them outside acceptable legal procedures and denied them many of the rights guaranteed by the constitution. As a way of concluding decades of ineffective restrictions, leaders took the established stereotypes, amplified them and effectively manipulated the identity of Japanese Americans. Shortly after the attack of Pearl Harbor on December 7th, 1941 Japanese Americans were bombarded with accusations of sabotage. Durring the months that followed the attack, propaganda images emerged, which depicted all Japanese as vermin-like creatures. By February, national and West coast news declared that all persons of Japanese heritage belonged to an enemy race. The Civilian Exclusion Orders were issued on March 31, 1942: this marked the beginning of the relocation and interment process. The Exclusion Orders were revoked in 1944. The relocation and internment process was the

culmination of decades of infringing laws. No matter the motivation, the pre-war racism and imprisonment of Japanese-Americans is a departure from America's democratic ideals; it needs to be examined closely to acknowledge and mitigate future or current intolerance.

This paper will examine how prewar racism against Asian Americans created the desire to imprison an entire group of people. The history of Asians in America will connect the relationship between racism and the economic success of an unwanted minority group. Identifying the intent of the restrictions placed on Japanese Americans will illustrate how internment was the desired result of a gradual process to end the economic viability of Japanese Americans. Answering the entire question of Japanese American success is not complete without knowing the factors which made the Japanese American communities so resilient to the social conditions of their new home. The cause of interment was more than wartime anxiety. Following racism and its source exposes a much shallower motivation for the interment; the cause was economic expediency, not military necessity.

The national census of 1940 estimated that 126,948 Japanese Americans lived in the Unitied States. In all, Japanese Americans made up less than one tenth of one percent of the total United States population.[1] Close to ninety percent of the Japanese Americans were isolated to the three west coast states of Washington, Oregon and California. The people who were born and immigrated to the United States were the first generation, or Issei. The second generation, born in the United States, is the Nisei. The first generations of Japanese Americans achieved economic success because of the principles of their

[1]. Roger Daniels, *Concentration Camps: North America Japanese in the United States and Canada During World War II* (Robert E. Krieger Publishing Company, 1981), 1.

native culture; but due to skin color their success was perceived as unfair competition, not the fulfillment of the American dream.

Prior to the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the loyalty of the Japanese Americans was questioned by military and civilian leaders. The Japanese Americans were referred to as a dangerous fifth column. An intelligence investigation ordered by Roosevelt in 1941 called the Munson Report disagreed with the existing speculations, a passage from the report stated "There is no Japanese problem." [2] This report found an incredible amount of loyalty to America and concluded that there would be no armed uprising of Japanese. The Munson Report validated its findings by exposing the limitations of the Japanese Americans. The Japanese Americans were isolated to industries such as farming, and, in addition to their isolation, their physical appearance would not allow infiltration without going unnoticed. [3] The report also recommended that the public's attitude toward the Japanese Americans needed to be led in a positive direction.

The foundation for relocating the Japanese Americans was the perception of their disloyalty. Yet in September of 1940 the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) called for the removal of the restrictions which prevented the entry of people of Japanese ancestry in to any branch of the armed service. A representative of the JACL stated, "American citizens of Japanese Ancestry are always ready and willing to do their utmost…"[4] The JACL was attempting to open a venue for Japanese Americans to prove their loyalty. The restrictions of service were not lifted until 1944, after approximately 110,000 Japanese were living in interment camps. Despite the betrayal by the United States thousands of men and women volunteered for the army. The 442nd regiment, which

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[2] Michi Weglyn, *Years of Infamy,* (New York, Morrow Quill, 1976), 34
[3] Weglyn, 46.
[4] "Japanese Citizens Urge right to Fight for U.S." *Oregonian,* September 3, 1940, pg. 7.

was comprised of only Nisei, has received more commendations than any fighting unit and suffered the most casualties in any of the American wars.

Initially the press circulated favorable stories about the Japanese American citizenry. After approximately four weeks, the positive commentary was overwhelmed by accusation of sabotage. Leaders such as Secretary of the Navy, Frank Knox stated, "…There was a considerable amount of evidence of subversive activity on the part of the Japanese prior to the attack."[5] Knox denied Americans the specifics but reassured them that there was evidence. Unverified accusations from military and civilian leaders was part of a successful and deliberate attempt to manipulate public opinion. This environment allowed the relocation and internment of approximately 110,000 men women and children.

The evacuation from the west coast began five months after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Without a single verified case of sabotage, Japanese Americans were ordered to report to control stations. In some circumstances only a four day notice to organize personal affairs was given. The initial accusations of sabotage came from Hawaii, where it was claimed that Japanese residence of Hawaii blocked vital roads and rammed grounded planes with vehicles. These reports were not officially denounced by the federal authority until three months after the attack.[6] The possibility of a mainland Japanese invasion and the existence of Japanese planes and submarines were the type of rumors that circulated. These types of stories skipped the verification process and went directly in to circulation. An article by Edward Barnhart, explained,"The expulsion and incarceration of the Japanese began five months after Pearl Harbor, despite the complete

[5] Weglyn, 52
[6] Galen Fisher "Japanese Evacuation from the Pacific Coast," Far Eastern Survey 11 (1942): 146.

absence of any evidence of acts of espionage or sabotage by continental or Hawaiian Japanese, and continued after the Japanese fleet was decisively defeated in the Battle of Midway in June, 1942 and the possibility of an invasion of Hawaii or the main land eliminated."[7] With the fears of a mainland invasion gone and the reassurance provided by the Munson Report, internment based on military necessity should have eroded.

Given the historical facts and the keeping in mind what officials knew at the time of the relocation it is easy to assume that their choices were motivated by something other than military necessity. General John Dewitt who was in charge of western defense command, along with other leaders were able to frame the hysteria in their chosen context. In DeWitt's final report, he used military terms such as "deployed" and "at large" when describing how many Japanese people lived along the west coast. This type of "word smithing" does not happen by accident. A final example to affirm the lack of credibility amongst the leaders is available in a letter to Henry Stimson, from Dewitt; Dewitt states, "The very fact that no sabotage has taken place to date is a disturbing and confirming indication that such action will be taken."[8] Lack of proof does not equate with proof, but the public was eager to blame someone for the Pearl Harbor attacks, and Japanese Americans fit the cast.

More evidence of the blinded logic of the leaders is available in the1942 Government Population Index. The Index stated, "Military considerations cannot permit the risk of putting an unassimilated or partly assimilated people to an unpredictable test during an invasion by an army of their own race."[9] Lt. General John DeWitt, who was

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[7] Edward N. Barnhart "The Individual Exclusion of Japanese Americans in World War II," *The Pacific Historical Review* 29 (1960): 111.
[8] John Armor and Peter Wright, MANZANAR (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 44.
[9] Population Index, *The Evacuations of the Japanese,* July 1942, 166-168.

appointed as the Western Defense Commander, reacted to the Pearl Harbor attack by declaring the entire west coast of the United States and the southern portion of Arizona as a 'strategic military zone.' Within this zone Japanese Americans were forbidden. After assessing all of the available sources of intelligence, Franklin Roosevelt signed executive order 9066, on February 19th 1941. This order provided the authority to relocate and intern all Japanese Americans along the west coast. The order also demonstrates how erroneous accusations were elevated above legitimate reports. The executive order was delivered under the guise of military necessity, but the immediate outcome of significant financial loss to the Japanese Americans exposes the economic motivations. Many of the Japanese American families had to sell all property that they could not carry to the camps. In 1983 a commission was organized to establish a value of the total loss of property. The commissions findings concluded that losses were, "...as high as $6.2 billon (in 1983 dollars)."[10]

The War Relocation Authority (WRA) was created in 1942 by Franklin Roosevelt. The WRA was in charge of the supervising the relocation process and the structure of camp life. The WRA was also responsible for public relation matters, including making the camps appear habitable and full of happy citizens. In truth the WRA hastily assembled the internment camps: at the Manzanar camp; the type of housing provided was approved for soldiers with survival skills and only as temporary solution.[11] This was not for civilian families with young and elderly. People from a variety of professions worked for the WRA to monitor the camp environment. Sociologists, along with anthropologists, made observations of the Japanese Americans,

[10] John Armor and Peter Wright, *Manzanar* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 81
[11] Armor, 85.

as if they were examining a social experiment. After the war, internment facilities were vacated as quickly as they had been filled. After what seemed like a nightmare, the Issei and Nisei returned to civilian life. A significant number of people did not return to the west coast because there was nothing to which to return. Their farms and businesses had been taken over by whites and a generational divide was created amongst a once homogenous group.

A concerted effort by the WRA ethnographers attempted to validate positive aspects of the interment process. The ethnographers wrote of the internment process as a way to speedily acculturate an ethnic minority and a way of discontinuing the isolation of the "little Tokyos."[12] Internment was quickly removed from public discourse, and for many years the internees did not speak of there experiences and how such a thing could happen in a country where people have certain inalienable rights.

Many authors have examined Japanese American history. A majority of material available for Japanese Americans gravitates toward the relocation and internment process. To support the economic factors involved with the racism towards Japanese Americans a larger timeframe needs to be examined. Most primary and secondary sources offer a background of life before World War II: integrating the various sources provides a full scope of the economic, cultural and political factors. Among the varying theses, there is a consensus that the internment was not out of military necessity but to accomplish other agendas.

Allan Bosworth, a former member of the United States Navy, suggests that the Japanese were subject to discrimination in association with the Chinese "Yellow Peril."

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[12] Orin Starn "Engineering Internment: Anthropologist and the War Relocation Authority," *American Ethnologist* 13 (November 1986): 715.

As the Japanese migrants began to arrive in visible numbers throughout the 1880s, their economic success and reluctance to assimilate contributed to a groundswell of racism.[13] The main focus of Bosworth's work is to record the valiant efforts of the Japanese Americans who served during the Second World War and the internment camps; however, he does briefly discuss the early experiences of the Issei migrants in order to give the rest of his research context.

Offering a more in-depth examination of pre-war anti-Japanese racism is Roger Daniels. Daniels suggests that if the California state government had not been restricted by the federal government, far more bills would have passed the state legislature, with design to limit economic opportunities for the Japanese Americans. [14] Even with the federal governments slight restrictions on the state legislature the Japanese Americans were deprived the rights of normal citizens, such as land ownership. Daniels has been one of the leading contributors to this theme. Over a long career he has written a volume of his own books and offers insight into many other researchers' books.

A second source by Daniels reviews the racism involved with the treatment of the Japanese Americans. The book, *The Politics of Prejudice* uses the discussions among political interests groups and elected officials to display the racial rhetoric. Daniels puts the discussions in to context, but, for the most part, uses extended quotes. The extended quotes, which allow people from the past to speak for themselves. Stuart McClatchy delivered a speech to the Senate in 1924 that exemplifies the type of language used against the Japanese,"The Japanese are less assimilable and more dangerous as residence of this country than any other of the people s ineligible under our laws… They never

[13] Allan R. Bosworth, *America's Concentration Camps* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1968), 23.
[14] Roger Daniels and Spencer c. Olin, Jr. *Racism In California: A Reader In The History of Oppression* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1972) 116.

cease being Japanese. In pursuit of their intent to colonize this country with that race they seek to secure land and to found large families." [15]Quotes from people of all tiers of government are presented. Unfiltered quotes from policy makers reveal the conventional wisdom of the time.

The book *Concentration Camps: North America,* By Daniels includes details on Japanese migrants in Canada. The Japanese were ill received in Canada as well as the United States. The Japanese Canadians successes in the fishing industry created the same economic resentment that was prevalent in the United States. Canada also mirrored the United States in the removal of the Japanese, andCanada was responsible for the removal and relocation of approximately 21,000 Japanese.[16]

Patriotic societies along the west coast demanded and facilitated the various legal acts against Japanese migrants. It can be argued that their intent was purely racial, but the real source of their hostility was economic competition. In the tail end of the 19th century, the Japanese began to migrate to Hawaii and the west coast. Author Yamato Ichihashi suggests that in many ways the Japanese inherited the anti Asian racism focused on the Chinese. Opposition to the Japanese came in the form of vicious attacks from whites who occupied the same economic sector. Campaigns that were started by labor parties who influenced the state government: "The attack was launched against the factory owner for employing Japanese in a manner offensive to the union… At any rate, the Japanese finding it impossible to remain in the factory because Chase (the factory

[15] Rodger Daniels, *The Politics of Prejudice* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1977), 99.
[16] Rodger Daniels, *Concentration Camps: North America-Japanese in the United States and Canada During World War II.* (Florida: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Co, 1981),175.

owner) failed to provide necessary protection for them, left it and sought work in families and on ranches. "[17] One example of white protectionism came from California Governor Henry T. Gage in 1901.

> "The peril from Chinese labor finds a similar danger in the unrestricted immigration of Japanese laborers. The cheapness of that labor is likewise a menace to American labor, and a new treaty with Japan for such restriction, as well as the passage of laws by Congress, is desired for the Protection of Americans."[18]

The West Coast State officials submitted to the desires of unions and patriotic societies because of their own beliefs or were simply fearful of losing their next public election.

The federal attempt to cripple the economic potential of the Japanese Americans was enacted in the form of the Immigration Act of 1924. The new immigration law was backed up by what was, at the time, considered to be hard scientific facts. Mae Ngai summarizes the act in one simple sentence, "The central theme of that process was a race-based nativism, which favored the "Nordics" of northern and western Europe over the "undesirable races" of eastern and southern Europe."[19] The potential to assimilate into American culture was a matter of how white a people group appeared. The scientific foundation for the law can only be classified as eugenics in present day terms.

Validating the necessity of the internment camps was not achieved by presenting legitimate facts, but rather by withholding intelligence. Michi Weglyn examines the secret Munson Report, which was conducted in October and November of 1941. Its findings dissolved any conceptions of disloyalty

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[17] Yamato Ichihashi, *Anti-Japanese Agitation, featured in* ed. Roger Daniels and Spencer Olin Jr. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1972), 106.
[18] Ichihashi. 108.
[19] Mae M. Ngai, "The Architecture of Race in American Immigration Law: A Reexamination of the Immigration Act of 1924," *Journal of American History* 86 (1999): 69.

surrounding the Japanese Americans. Weglyn specifically identifies those who concealed this document before proceeding with the relocation and internment. "Evidence would indicate that the Munson report was shared only by the State, War and Navy departments; yet paradoxically Cornell Hull, Henry Stimson and Frank Knox, who headed up these Cabinet posts, were to end up being the most determined proponents of evacuation."[20] Stimson prepared Roosevelt's briefing, which included a copy of the Munson Report. Stimson's briefing stated how careful thought was given to Munson's findings. Yet based on the outcome of Executive Order 9066, it does not seem logical to believe their deliberations included the Munson Report.

The sources examining early Japanese migration experience, display the anti Japanese agitation with was fueled by economic factors. The anti Japanese movement responded to their perceived threat by enacting restrictions on landownership and migration laws. The sources focusing on time surrounding the relocation continue with the prewar racism and describe how the internment occurred. After assessing the statements that endorsed internment and the individuals who championed the military necessity stance, it is clear that their motivation was something other than national security. Dewitt, Knox and other people in positions of authority did not present evidence to back their claims, instead they misused their positions to certify their statements.

Ronald Takaki includes details of what it meant to be a Japanese migrant and an American of Japanese heritage. Takaki asserts that the adversity experienced by the Japanese migrants was motivated by racism and the origins of

[20]. Weglyn, *Years of Infamy*, 34

the racism came from the desire to not compete economically with the Japanese. Also the ability to assimilate into American culture was used to quantify the accomplishments of an ethnic group. Because of overt appearance differences, Japanese Americans could never fully assimilate. Takaki illustrates this point by comparing the immigration of Armenians and how they were granted citizenship because they looked more Caucasian, yet the Japanese migrants were excluded from citizenship. A local farmer of the Fresno California area laments over the situation, "The Armenians, they like the Japanese, lots speak only Armenian- just like Issei. They came about the same time too. But I think they learned a little bit more American and they look more like American and I think it helped them a lot." [21] This example shows the vast disparity between the restrictions of an ethnic group based on appearance. If an immigrant were successful while appearing white, it was called the American dream; however for the Japanese Americans success was called unfair competition.

The Japanese Americans who endured the relocation and internment offer the best explanations of why they were taken away and what the camps did to them as individuals and as a culture. Monitoring the effects of camp life on the Japanese American culture is important because it was the one nonmaterial thing that could not be affected by restrictive legislation. John Tateishi presents a large forum for people to express their memories of camp life. Tateishi's oral history book has thirty different accounts from men and women during the period of internment. Tateishi's book hints at the economic forces at work, "The fact is that

[21]. Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 15.

the exclusion and incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II successfully accomplished what local pressure groups on the West Coast had been unable themselves to achieve for half a century."[22] According to Tateishi, security had nothing to do with the actions taken against the Japanese Americans. Many of the individual accounts of camp life are full of frustration. They lost opportunities when they were interned, those who were seeking educations were interrupted and as a result their internment, the course of their life changed.

Monica Sone author of the book "Nisei Daughter" offers an inside perspective of life before the relocation began. Sone describes the betrayal she felt throughout the relocation process and how she internalized accusations and began to believe in the guilt of her people. Sone was a second generation Issei, and she describes the cultural divide between the Issei and Nisei generations that was created in the camp environment. A Issei mother grieved over her sons decision to join the military, "Is this what we deserve from our children, after years and years of work and hardship for their sake? Ah, we've bred nothing but fools! They can be insulted their parents insulted and still they volunteer. The Nisei never had backbones!"[23] Only the Nisei were allowed to volunteer for the military, civic positions within the camps were reserved for the Nisei as well.

An additional primary source, written by Mary Matsuda Gruenewald offers the clearest image of life before relocation. The concept of being excluded did not occur to Gruenewald prior to 1941, she recalls, "Dinner could include fried chicken and sushi. I always felt that I was Japanese American and I belonged in America, that I was part of a

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[22] John Tateishi, *And Justice for All: An Oral History of the Japanese American Detention Camps* (New York: Random House, 1984), xiv.
[23] Monica Sone, *Nisei Daughter* (Washington, University of Washington Press 1953), 201.

group. Before December 7, 1941, it never occurred to me that I was not."[24] Gruenewald was a teenager when Executive Order # 9066 was issued. Gruenewald recalls a conversation between her and her brother in the days that followed the Pearl Harbor Attack, "I wonder what will happen next…And what about us? Surely it will make a difference because we have been good citizens in our community, and Mary and I are Americans not Japanese.[25] Gruenewald's age allowed her to understand how the structure of camp life wedged the Issei and Nisei generations apart. Like many other Nisei, Gruenewald and her brother volunteered for military service, despite the unfavorable treatment by their own country.

In the decades before the 1940s, the following state and national laws were enacted to curtail the growth of the Japanese migrant population in the United States. The earliest was the 1907 Gentlemen's Agreement, which ended the issuing of passports to Japanese labors. Japanese migrants bypassed this law by traveling to either Canada or Mexico and continuing their migration from their. The next restrictive measures came at the state level. The alien land laws prohibited Japanese American migrants from owning land and limited the longevity of land leases to three years. The Issei were ineligible for citizenship because of their nation of origin. The alien land laws were enacted by California in 1913, Oregon and Washington in 1923 and various other states along the way. The Japanese skirted these laws by purchasing land in the names of their young children. Restrictions on the longevity of leases also were poorly enforced because many of the large land holders wanted to retain their lucrative, hard working Japanese leasers. Masao Suzuki explained the 1924 Immigration Act "In 1922 the Supreme Court ruled

[24] Mary Matsuda Gruenewald, *Looking Like the Enemy: My Story of Imprisonment in Japanese-American Internment Camps* (Oregon: New Sage Press, 2005), 11.
[25]Matsuda Gruenewald, 6.

that Japanese were ineligible for naturalization because they were neither white nor of African decent; and in 1924, the U.S. government passed a restrictive immigration law that included a clause excluding Japanese from immigration."[26] The design of these restrictions was to stop the economic success of the Japanese American migrants, yet the implications of these laws focused on land and population.

To comprehend the thought process of the relocation leaders it is important to consider the popular discourse of the Japanese Americans prior to Pearl Harbor. Labor groups, such as The Native Sons of the Golden West, distributed materials that stated "Californian was given by God to a white people, and with God's strength we want to keep it as he gave it to us."[27] A journal article by Paul Scharrenberg in 1921 accurately reveals the foundation of the anti-Japanese sentiment. White labor organizer declared competition with the Japanese Americans as "evil." The various labor organizers lobbied their state representatives to enact regulations to further limit the economic viability of the Japanese. A letter to a senator in 1921 from The California State Federation of Labor explained,

> "We are anxious to have enacted an exclusion law which will effectively and permanently bar these little brown men from our shores. Our objection to the Japanese in California is not, as you well know, based upon trivial or sentimental reasons. We Object to them for economic reasons, we know Californians can not compete with them and maintain an American standard of living." [28]

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[26] Masao Suzuki, "Success Story? Japanese Immigrant Economic Achievement and the Return Migration, 1920, 1930," *The Journal of Economic History* 55, no.5 (1995): 891.
[27] John Armor and Peter Wright, 29.
[28] Paul Scharrenberg, "The Attitude of Organized Labor toward the Japanese," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 93* (January 1921):35.

The State Federation of Labor representative was able to include a racial statement inside his self-declared, non-trivial or racial statement, but he was able to identify the source of his racism within his statement as well.

Using local and national newspapers in order to track the dissemination of information is useful. Since the Japanese population was concentrated on the west coast, national news outlets such as The New York Times offered very limited coverage. However the Oregonian covered the local population of Japanese closely. A critique of the press as a whole is provided by Gary Y. Okihiro and Julie Sly. They examine the time frame of when negative stories began to circulate, along with the ramifications of the language and tone used by the press. Okihiro and Sly are critical of the press and the roll they played in skillfully manipulating the public opinion. "The newspapers incited further racial violence by alleging espionage and sabotage." [29] Okihiro and Sly view the press as a variation of a political pressure group who instigates crisis instead of moderating popular opinion.

In a 1921 article from the Oregonian, residents of Hood River, Oregon expressed their earnest feelings about what they called the Japanese question: "The problem in a large measure is a national one, but this part relating to land ownership is our own."[30] The steady increase of land ownership among Japanese immigrants created unwelcome competition for the white population. The newspaper article depicts the anger of the non Japanese Oregonians in response to what they see as unfair competition. They are also welcoming the introduction of new restrictive measures at both a state and federal levels.

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[29] Gary Y. Okihiro and Julie Sly, "The Press, Japanese Americans, and the Concentration Camps," *Phylon* 44 (1983): 67.
[30] "Anti-Japanese Sentiment is Strong in Hood River," *Oregonian*, January 13, 1921, pg. 6.

An article published in January 28, 1921 in the Oregonian involves an Idaho state legislative resolution. "By this resolution the legislature would call upon congress to deny further extension of the right of citizenship to Japanese, to exclude Japanese from immigration hereafter."[31] The Idaho residents felt the same vulnerability from the Japanese Americans and wanted binding resolutions to limit the viability of their socioeconomic growth. Only three years later the United States Immigration act banned future immigration from Japan and other regions. The criteria of who could immigrate to the United States after the immigration act were based on race; the ability to acculturate was determined by how Caucasian an immigrant appeared. The format of the early news papers featured small stories with the required "who, what and where" Usually one quote from a participant was featured but the total length of the articles was little more than a few short paragraphs.

The New York Times early coverage of the "Japanese question" also is an attempt to close the rift between Japan and the United States. A 1924 article quotes a representative of the Tokyo Chamber of Commerce. The representative, Mr. Yamamoto, was understanding of the racial turmoil inside the United States and identified it as something America would have to confront internally. Mr. Yamamoto made an assertive statement regarding future relations, "Japan favors peace, not because we are afraid of war, but because we hate war…we believe that security and rights can best be preserved by pursuing a policy of international accord rather than that of selfish aggression."[32] As a nation Japan established itself as a force to be reckoned with, common territorial

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[31] "Idaho House Puts Curb on Japanese: Anti –Alien Resolution Adopted Decisively." *Oregonian,* January 28, 1921, pg. 5.
[32] "Says Japanese Understand: Yamamoto Declares People Appreciate Our Stand and Want Peace." *The New York Times,* April 16, 1924, 37:6.

interests, combined with the unfavorable treatment of the Japanese American migrants frustrated the Japanese who still lived In Japan. These complex variables placed diplomatic relations between the United States and Japan on edge.

A 1932 article by Thomas Bailey frames the motives around the Alien Land law. Bailey explains the rational of why national news outlets, such as The New York Times would not be as alarmed as the news outlets along the West Coast, "Of 27,000,000 acres of improved land in the state, the Japanese owned 12,726 acres in 1912… These few figures are eloquent, and they explain why Easterners were unable to understand the necessity for immediate and drastic action."[33] Given the amount of cultivatable land held by the Japanese Americans, the reaction to their presence was out of proportion, the people in the east thought the west coast was full of alarmist.

The 1913 California Land Law and similar acts, tried keep land out of the hands of the Japanese. Labor unions presumed farming would be impossible without land. A mixture of lose enforcement and ways around the law enabled economic growth among the Japanese Americans, after the initial setbacks. After the labor unions were no longer pacified by restrictions on land ownership their actions progressed. The 1924 Immigration Act banned all future immigration on the grounds that the Japanese were racially ineligible to citizenship based on the "national origins" theory.[34] At this point the Japanese Americans began to move into many other sectors other than agriculture, but a majority of the people remained in agriculture. Within agriculture the Japanese Americans still managed to increase their profitability, even after land and immigration of new Japanese had been cut off.

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[33] Thomas A. Bailey, "California, Japan, and the Alien Land Legislation of 1913," *Pacific Historical Review* 1 no. 1 (1932): 38.
[34] Ngai73.

The measures taken against the Japanese Americans had the intent of limiting the growth of their population and to constrain their economic development. The restrictions placed on the Japanese Americans were less than effective compared those placed upon blacks in America after the Civil War; however the desired result was similar. The restrictions were designed to prevent socioeconomic mobility; once the preconceived economic failure comes to fruition; it in turn vindicates the prejudice against the targeted minority group. The Japanese were able to continue growth in spite of the immigration and land ownership restrictions because of their unique tightly-nit social communities and the values of their culture.

The Japanese American culture went unnoticed as being part of what made them successful. Evaluating their culture is separate from assessing the early restrictions because their culture was not disrupted until the relocation and internment process. The Japanese immigrants were unlike other minority groups in the United States. For instance, a profile of the Issei immigrants stated that a majority came from the agrarian middle class, where education was valued.[35] The Issei were also very good at organizing their labor and working collectively. They were not as visible as other minority groups; they lived in concentrations of their own people, in part to avoid outside racism. Within their communities poor behavior was suppressed internally by the use of gossip and cultural guilt. Their system used labor bosses who would negotiate wages with white land owners. The labor bosses also provided a social safety net for those people working for him. The labor-boss system limited large scale interactions between the Issei and their adopted communities.

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[35] George T. Endo and Connie Kubo Della-Piana, "Japanese Americans, Pluralism and the Model Minority Myth" *Theory into Practice* 20 (1981): 46

Beginning as farm laborers, the Issei found economic traction within their culture structure. Upward mobility came relatively quickly in comparison to other minority groups. Within a few decades the Issei and their young Nisei children had diversified their earning capability and, to a degree, circumvented the land laws that restricted their mobility. Three years before the 1913 Alien land Law, the Issei owned approximately 15% of the land they worked. In 1914 the percentage of land owned dropped to 11%, yet by 1925 a full recovery was made and land owner ship grew to 35%.[36] The Issei purchased land in the names of their children, who were United States citizens. "A single Nisei might technically own the farms of several relatives and closes friends."[37] Usually the land that was available for sale to the Japanese was third rate. The Japanese ameliorated this problem by choosing high intensity specialty crops on these marginal lands, which allowed them to corner new markets of truck crops.

A United States Works Projects Administration report in 1957 offered individual cases of the ingenuity and cooperation among the Japanese. At the end of one story that transpired in 1905, the administration explained that, within a decade, the Japanese immigrants had inserted themselves into all tiers of the agriculture industry. White growers were disgruntled because they were being out worked and undersold by the Japanese, the result of the white sentiment were urges to the state for more restrictions based on ethnicity and citizenship.[38] John Hersey's commentary in the book "Manzanar" gives value to the accomplishments of the Japanese Americans. "They had worked wonders in the soil. They owned about one-fifteenth of the arable land in the three coast

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[36] Yamoto Ichihashi, *Japanese in the United States* (Stanford University Press, 1932),193.
[37] Robert M. Jiobu, "Ethnic Hegemony and the Japanese of California" *American Sociological Review* 53 (June 1988) 359.
[38] U.S. Works Progress Administration Project, *The Story of Japanese Farming in California*, (University of California, no.7456), 24.

states, and what they had made of their farms is suggested by the fact that the average value per acre of all farms in the three states in 1940 was $37.94, while an acre on a Nisei farm was worth on average, $279.96.[39] High intensity specialty crops created this success. White farmers practicing mono-crop agriculture were not as prosperous.

The information in this paper supports the original thesis of pre war racism and the relocation process as a product of economic forces. The enduring racism was simply a derivative of economic competition from an unwanted people group. The restrictions placed on the Japanese Americans were aimed at striping away the items needed for success. The restrictions and their designers overlooked the actual source of Japanese American resiliency: their ability to overcome adversity resided within their culture.

The Japanese Americans found it more pleasant to live in tightly knit communities among other Japanese immigrants. Within this arrangement they enjoyed the stability of their social network and the profitably of their organized labor systems. In a large part the close-knit communities were formed in response to the long history of discrimination along the west coast. To this point, federal and state governments restricted every tangible thing that created economic mobility for the Japanese Americans. The last thing left to take away were the aspects of their culture that promote economic successes.

The design of camp life divided the Issei and Nisei, disrupting the traditional paternalistic culture and means of organization. Because of the illogical decisions of General DeWitt and others, it is not rational to give them credit for having this result in mind. The relocation centers were constructed so quickly that these effects were not likely premeditated on the part of the WRA. Prior to relocation, the Japanese Americans

[39] John Armor and Peter Wright, *Manzanar* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 6.

households were highly paternalistic; respect for their elders was also a foundation of their culture. Each relocation camp was designed as pseudo democracy, which bared the Issei from participation in the civic matters. As a result camp life removed the patriarchal control held by the Issei and turned over leadership to the Nisei. Programs within the internment camps directed by the WRA, seemed arranged in such a fashion to facilitate the function of severing the family bonds within the Japanese American culture. A review of the WRA activities suggests that many of the Issei were so disillusioned about life outside of camp they wanted to permanently settle at the relocation facilities. This was due to the enculturation process which was unequally administered to the Issei.[40]

The autobiographies of the relocation and internment process support this concept. Many authors spoke of the wedge driven between the Issei and Nisei. Monica Sone's recollection of a mother lamenting over her son's decision to fight for the United States was a powerful display of the generational division as the deterioration of family unity. Similar to all of the restrictions of the past, the Japanese Americans recovered. The internment did not end the strong cultural structure that made the Japanese economically feared; the internment merely caused a disruption.

Trying to question my own logic, in anticipation of counter arguments, I try to find weakness in the concept of the interment camps being used to break the strong culture bonds of the Japanese Americans. None of the sources overtly stated this was the design, but it was the outcome. After the formation of the relocation camps the WRA attempted to frame the internment as a way to protect the Japanese from violence. This stance is not credible either, because it would be far more expedient to stop the

[40] Orin Starn "Engineering Internment: Anthropologist and the War Relocation Authority," *American Ethnologist* 13 (November 1986): 715.

dissemination of false information that fueled hysteria. Instead the government took three months to address the first set of false accusations; by that point truth was just a matter of opinion. The evidence that was at the disposal of Americas leaders stated a mainland attack was not possible after June of 1942, but they persisted with the policy of relocation out of military necessity. The outcome of this campaign instantly removed the Japanese Americans from economic competition. All racism is born out of fear; the catalyst for the racism against the Japanese Americans was born from fear of the eventual economic superiority of a perceived lesser race.

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